

FESTIVAL SHRINES

WILL SCRANTON WOODHULL



Class BV 43

Book W 6

Copyright N^o _____

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

Festival Shrines

By
WILL SCRANTON WOODHULL



Cincinnati
JENNINGS AND GRAHAM
New York
EATON AND MAINS

BV43
.W6

COPYRIGHT, 1913, BY
JENNINGS AND GRAHAM

5

0

\$1.50

©CL.A350777

no 1

TO
T. R. M.

WHOSE PRAISE FOR THESE FRAGMENTS
MEANS MOST TO ME

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THANKSGIVING SHRINES, - - -	11
CHRISTMAS-TIDE, - - - - -	41
EASTER MIRACLES, - - - -	57
"SUNSET AND EVENING STAR," - -	89

THANKSGIVING SHRINES

WHEN AUTUMN WALKS ACROSS THE HILLS

WHEN Autumn walks across the hills,
The hunchback maples blush aflame;
The slender asp-trees quiver white
Through shining green shot with the light
Of midnight moons.

The red-stemmed osiers, bending where
The brooks run still, full proudly wear
Their royal robes. With soft acclaim
Come cañons musical with rills
When Autumn walks across the hills.

When Autumn walks across the hills,
The peasant sage unheeding stands
Dust-gray upon the long gray slope;
The gloomy cedar, void of hope,
Knows not, nor cares.
The dark-browed laurel, crouching low,
Hears not her feet impassioned go;
Yet, on the dull up-tilted lands,
Each step the riot color fills
When Autumn walks across the hills.

THANKSGIVING SHRINES

MY friend and I can never go walking together with much satisfaction to both, for he must always have a goal, if it be for no other purpose than that of a turning-post to indicate the exact spot at which the outward journey should end and the homeward trip begin. Further, he will go to that particular spot and return from it by the legitimate routes—roads that run straight and corners that are square. He will not tolerate those cross-cuts that charm me with their uncertain promises and their childlike mysteries. He abhors the obtuse angles of a highland trail and abominates the sinuous curves of a lowland path. The former, he acknowledges, may be necessary evils, but the latter he holds to be inexcusable impositions upon the time and patience of the wayfarer. Now I, to my friend's supreme disgust, am different. The straight road is very tiresome to me unless, perchance, it be lined with one of those old-fashioned rail-fences that offer, whimsically, to the traveler a possible surprise in

FESTIVAL SHRINES

every corner. In such a case, on a sudden—and in the suddenness of the discovery lies much of the charm—we find here a teeming ant-hill, like a miniature city of men, giving birth to a thousand fanciful conjectures concerning its thronging life; there we see all at once a bunch of crane's-bill, its delicate lavender hues blending with the soft grays of the weathered rails behind; further on we start a rabbit from his couching place in the thick grass, and watch him run across the pasture with sundry saucy flirts of that bunch of cotton called by courtesy his tail, and repeated petulant kicks of his long hind feet, which express to his satisfaction his opinion of us. Nor is the highway unattractive if it run straight through a bit of woodland. Then it becomes the wonderful nave of a Gothic cathedral open to the skies, flanked with shadowy cloisters among the columnar trunks, and filled to the central aisle with kneeling worshipers of hazel-brush and blackberry bushes, who whisper their prayers while a gentle, weird wind-spirit moves with halting penitence toward the distant altar-hill.

Such are pleasant enough, but, in the main, I find no use for roads save for certain utilitarian purposes, with which I will have nothing to do

THANKSGIVING SHRINES

to-day. When people ask me where I am going, I like to answer with the alluring participle of aimless activity rather than the stern prepositional phrase of exact location: "I am not going anywhere,—just walking." So, forgetting the points of the compass and becoming blind to the familiar landmarks, I follow the path or leave it, climb the hill or skirt its base, plunge into the cool halls and lofty chambers of the wood or seek the wide, wind-swept spaces of the open field, as the whim takes me or the nearest charm allures me. My friend's honest and emphatic execration of the whole proceeding is to me somewhat incomprehensible and wholly amusing.

All of which is to say that my friend is logical and thinks, while I am imaginative and dream. So I call his arguments dry, and he says that my meditations fully prove the possibility of a complete mental vacuum. Therefore, since each man can do what the other can not, we do vastly admire each other, albeit our minds, like our feet, stray far apart. Thus it came to pass that, on a Thanksgiving morning, he and I sat together in the church, and while waiting for the services to begin—for, as becomes men and ministers, we came early—each

FESTIVAL SHRINES

praised God after his own fashion. He looked about the place of worship, appraising its practical worth and, meantime, gave God formal thanks for health and for prosperity, for home and for loved ones, for friends and for their kindnesses, for a free country abiding in peace, for the high privilege of feeding and clothing some of God's poor, of proclaiming the gospel of the Master, and of extending in some measure the Kingdom of heaven. I trust that I was not wholly unmindful of these things, but I can not be sure, for hardly was I seated, when my eyes found a wonderful window in which ever walked the Master with face aglow and gesturing hand, while on either side a thirsty man drank deep from the fountain and knew it not. I did not much notice the men, nor did I think of the way to Emmaus, nor of what He talked, for I saw only that He was walking, and that the path went not straight, but curved gently, as though it would extend the glory of that hour, and that it passed into the window-casing, and thus became my own, winding where I would. Straight-way I dreamed; the men were left behind and the Master walked with me, and the way led through the year I had just lived. It all seemed new to

THANKSGIVING SHRINES

me that morning in the church, though I had not lived blindly. Here and there He showed me a Jacob's well, at which I could have found unexpected living water, and here and there a Bethel, where I might have reared an altar to the present God out of my "stony griefs." Then we came to a Pisgah of glorious prospect, and what was dim when I looked alone, became richly clear now He stood by my side. And there was my Patmos of bitter suffering; but I forgot its hardness that morning when, by only a gesture, He revealed to me with a wondrous vividness the vision of the City of God which that hour contained.

But all these are hid away in the secret places of the soul, which can be opened to none except now and again to our high priests of friendship. Of these, therefore, I can not speak. But the peculiar wonder and glory of the walk I took with the Master that morning were found in the fashion in which He would be showing me every little way some nook or corner made bright by the presence of God, places where I might have raised little shrines and offered oblations of praise with very great joy. These are so many that I can not tell of them all, and so common to every life that you

FESTIVAL SHRINES

will soon be finding some of your own, and they, being your own, will prove far more interesting to you than any of mine.

One of these shrines was in a sunset. My day had been hard, filled to overflowing with toil that came to nothing. Annoyances had swarmed about me, failure in precious plans seemed imminent, life appeared cheap and unworthy, its dust and turmoil offended ear and eye. Besides, I had not borne myself altogether like a man, and I was somewhat shamed. Back through that day we went, the Master and I. The weariness of it drew down the corners of my mouth again, its discouragements clouded my eyes, and the sin that entered it reddened my cheek. Through its hours we passed silently till we came to its sunset and stood on the hill, whence I saw the sun sink into the broken clouds of evening. I remembered that it had brought something of comfort to me; but with Him by my side I saw that God had sent much more by it than I had taken. So here I built the Shrine of the Augúst Fellowship.

All day long I had worked, and much of my toil had come to nothing. All day long the sun with

THANKSGIVING SHRINES

infinite energy had been shooting out its shafts of light and heat, and most of them were lost in the vast darkness and the measureless cold of the universal spaces. From our point of view, however, the few rays that fell upon our pin-point of matter were indispensable and justified the great waste. Must I complain, then, because so much of my day's work was wasted if by some word or deed I helped some one a little? Shall I not be a brother to the sun and scatter broadcast what I am able, that a little may be useful somewhere? But the annoyances of the day? Did not the steady sun pull against the attraction of a million million stars and pursue his course with calmness? Indeed, did not these very hindrances hold him in his path? Why, then, should I have fretted about the obstacles and the distractions of the day? I made my way to the sunset in spite of them, or, it may be, because of them. The sun and I are fellows. It sinks behind the western hills, its light is lost, its heat is being dissipated, it seems to fail; but we know that in the morning it will sweep over the hills in the east with light and warmth again. And is not my failure more apparent than real, and shall I not rise to other service and to other success for-

FESTIVAL SHRINES

ever? The pink and the yellow and the red and the scarlet that made the beauty of the sunset were possible only because the dust rose and the clouds gathered. The peculiar magnificence of the hour was found in the triumph of the sun over the sordid dust and the heavy clouds. How blind I was, not to see that the cheap, dusty turmoil of unworthiness that offended me was but my opportunity to reveal what glory was in me. So I was reminded of my sin. My shame deepened until I remembered that every sunset is followed by a sunrise. Then I knelt in the strangely quiet twilight and found the place of pardon. From it I came with a solemn gladness to face the unborn morrow. Part of this I saw that day, and part in my dream. But in my dream I saw clearly that, after all, I was not just a brother to the insensate sun moving blindly as it must, but a fellow-worker with Him who upholdeth all things by the word of His power. I was a thinking part of His vast and mighty universe, an intelligent element in His eternal plan. More than this I saw, standing beside the Christ. Since my best offering was a willing, a chosen service, I was become a partner of God. So that Thanksgiving morning I erected a

THANKSGIVING SHRINES

Shrine there to the August Fellowship, and many a time since I have found it a place of praise.

Many another shrine He showed me, but of them I will not say one word, lest I never cease, until we come to the day made sacred by the laughter of a babe. There I built the Shrine of the Child's Laughter. It was in the full flush of new-born spring. The tender grass was weaving its translucent fabric over the gray-brown of last year's blades; the trees were hung with a shimmering veil of soft green, save that the maples were red with buds, and the oaks, sullenly repelling the caresses of the sun, held still their winter bareness. On the slopes of the hills the broad wheatfields were squares of dark green, and above them the snow lay on the shoulders of the mountains, dazzling white in the morning sun. The robins were singing cheerily, and the sparrows chattered busily about their tasks of home-building. My own pulses beat warmly, while in me, like a rising tide, surged the joy of living, the sense of power, and the desire for accomplishment. It was not at all strange, then, that a toddling babe, fleeing with uncertain haste from the mother's outstretched hands, should stay

FESTIVAL SHRINES

my steps and win a word from my lips. But its confidence was not to be given carelessly to every stray passer-by. When I stopped, the babe came to a stand, wavering from one foot to the other till it solved that particular problem in the maintenance of its equilibrium. Then it looked at me; first timidly, next questioningly, then with a growing confidence, and at last with a complete trust. What its eyes, accustomed so short a time ago to angels' faces, saw in mine to win the little heart, I know not; but this I know—and when I remembered it, in the presence of the Master, it became the surpassing glory of that spring day and an abiding cause for thanksgiving—the babe trusted me and came to me gravely, with increasing eagerness, and held out its tiny, chubby arms. I lifted the little one high in the air, and held it so. Then came the laugh, a glint in the blue eyes, a lifting of the corners of the tender mouth, a parting of the bow-shaped lips, a wrinkling of rosy cheeks, a gleam of four white teeth; then, the eyes being lost in the merrily furrowed cheeks and the mouth opened wide, the laughter gurgled out in liquid sweetness. Starlight in the shining eyes, moonlight in the parted lips, dawnlight in the dimpling cheeks

THANKSGIVING SHRINES

with their roses, sunrise in the scarlet tongue-tip guarded by the snowy peaks of the teeth, the full choir of birdsongs in the bubbling laughter. Nor is this all, for, though I knew it but dimly till the Master showed me, the sweetest glories of heaven beat in upon my soul from that merry face. So it came to pass that I, laughing, gave the merry child into the hands of the laughing mother and went my way not knowing the miracle that had been wrought in me, for that morning there came to me a temptation to dishonesty in subtle strength, and I might have yielded but for the memory of the child's confidence. In the afternoon came somewhat of uncleanness clad in its daintiest garments, and surely it had soiled me but for the thought of the limpid depths of purity in the eyes of the child. And that evening, as I went home through the sullen dripping of a cold rain, there rose up out of certain failures of the day a monster of discouragement by which I would have been sore wounded were it not that I caught just a glimpse of the little one's face in the window, and was reminded that, however I had failed otherwise, still I had brought something of happiness to one child beloved of the Master and but lately

FESTIVAL SHRINES

come from Paradise. As I in my dream walked again through that day I realized what a rich benison came to me in the laughter of the child. So there I built my altar and laid on it my praise-offering.

Nor can I forbear telling you of my Shrine in the Place of the Silences. Sometimes I have thought that one reason for the barren spots of earth in which man can not dwell with his continual hurry and clatter is that he may withdraw into these solitudes now and again, according to his need, and listen to the voice that Elijah heard on Horeb, "a sound of gentle stillness." Often I tire of men and their affairs, though I love them individually and collectively, and hold it to be an ideal of Homeric grandeur "to live by the side of the road and be a friend to man." So it came to pass that one morning I found fault with the breakfast coffee, the unvarying excellence of which is one proof of my good matrimonial judgment, left the house with a curt and inclusive "Good-bye" to the whole family, was brutal to a timid college boy trying to make his way up the steeps of learning with a prospectus under his coat, listened indifferently to

THANKSGIVING SHRINES

the sad story of a burdened woman, needlessly offended my Sunday-school superintendent, crumpled up and hurled into the waste-basket with a ministerial malediction a bit of paper on which I had been endeavoring to outline a sermon from the text, "But let patience have her perfect work." My lunch-table behavior I will cover with a charitable veil of silence. Enough to say that, when it was over, my wife, with a wisdom born out of much association with me, suggested that I go fishing, and I had just sufficient sense left to take her advice. So I went out after trout and found a shrine.

I was surly enough as I went through the streets, but somehow the magic of the open began its work very soon. The stiff climb up the bench, the long walk across the rising slope of sage, untangled the scowls. The mild excitement of surprising the draws by sudden flanking movements which carried me across them with the least expenditure of energy, the startling leap of a long-eared rabbit, the swift rush of the sage-hen into flight from almost beneath my feet, charged again and again with much effect against my stubborn host of blues; but they were not wholly routed until I heard the soft roaring of the hidden brook and hurried down the slope to

FESTIVAL SHRINES

lie at full length on the stones and drink of its ice-cold, crystal waters from a little pool in the lee of a rock. I drank and rested and drank again, thinking the while, with a new sense of the providence in them, of the words, "He leadeth me beside the waters of rest."

The story of an afternoon with the trout is always the same and always different: the same shouting stream, with the quiet pools where it stops to get its breath; the rocks and the willows and the black birch, with the occasional fir or copse of quaking asp; the echoes from the cliff and the strange voices in the brook; the continual matching of strength and toughness against the rocks and the brush, and of wit and skill against the fish; the same patient insinuation of rod-tip and fly down arrowy ripples or across dark pools; the same repeated thrills from the strike of the fish—the tug, the dive, the rush, the leap; the same joy of victory when you land your prize, mingled with a bit of pity that so brave a fighter should fight in vain; the same bitter disappointment and self-arraignment when the biggest get away; the same unconsciousness of time and distance—these are all the same, yet, in some unaccountable way, these manifold experiences are always

THANKSGIVING SHRINES

different, so that each adventure after the speckled braves stands out vividly by itself.

I will not speak in detail of this excursion, only near the head of the stream I found the hour so late and the creel so full that I put away my tackle and started for home, across the silver-gray ridge which cut the western blue with its sinuous skyline and stood ready to cast its shadow across the narrow valley. This spur I climbed, and found as I passed the crest that the westering sun still shone warmly on its afternoon side. Being weary and at peace with all the world—a fact of which some were still in ignorance—I slipped off my heavy basket and stretched myself on a bit of grassy slope to rest and gaze and invite my soul. I was too content even to be ashamed of my unmitigated surliness of the forenoon. I looked forward with something of complacent joy to the privilege of asking my wife to forgive me, of apologizing to my superintendent, of visiting the burdened woman and helping as I might be able, and of buying a book from the college boy. The trout in my basket had not died in vain. Then I ceased to think, and fell a-gazing. There at my feet was the city, overhung with a cloud of dust and smoke, where lived those

FESTIVAL SHRINES

dear friends of mine with whom and for whom I joyed to labor. Beyond lay the irrigated valley, "full of ditches," with its scattered houses hiding in clumps of trees, its fields of golden wheat, brown plowed land, and dark-green alfalfa. Through the valley the river ran in its winding lane of willows, and away beyond, on the gray of the desert, it wound its silver loops that glistened in the far-slanted rays of the sun. Clear against the distant horizon stood the ragged outline of the real mountains with I knew not what mysteries of stream and peak, of windy highland and resounding cañon. While I looked, I listened as idly. I listened, but heard nothing save the faintest ghosts of sound, a wisp of music from the brook, the passing buzz of a single restless fly, the barest whisper of a runaway baby breeze, and those faint tinklings that come in such a silence only to him who does not try to hear, as though playful, timid fairies rang their silver bells when it seemed safe. Silence was about me. I rested on the silent earth; I looked out over a silent landscape; the silent air hung motionless around me; the afternoon sunshine seemed a warm and visible silence. Silence held me up, covered me over, stretched out illimitably on every side;

THANKSGIVING SHRINES

silence pressed upon me, embraced and held me close. Such stillness seemed sacred. I dared not move lest I break it; I breathed quietly; my very heart beat softly. I floated on a great sea of silence; I lay beneath a sky of stillness. For a season I was carried beyond all sense of space or of time. Then a wind whispered softly, and out of the cañon came a low rush of the brook's song, and a bumble-bee boomed past, and the call of a boy driving cattle came up from the valley at my feet. As I watched his herd I could hear the beating of their feet on the hard ground; the veering wind brought to my ears the rattle of a wagon on the valley road; then the great shop-whistle sent its deep note rolling up from the city, and I rose and with a high and solemn joy went down from the place of the silences to a larger life and a more perfect work.

As I went I remembered that Jacob had caught a glimpse of heaven from a wilderness, that Moses heard the Divine Voice from granite Sinai and fell headlong into God's arms from Pisgah, that David found the Shepherd of Israel on the sheep-dotted hills of Judah. Elijah heard Him in the silences of Carmel and Horeb; Jesus retired

FESTIVAL SHRINES

more than once into a mountain to pray, and John saw things on lonely Patmos that broke his speech into splendid fragments. And I—the thought shook my soul with rapture—I that very afternoon had come into this wondrous fellowship of solitude and with these of old had worshiped in the Shrine of the Silences.

Perhaps because the contrast made my heart a little more sensitive I found the Shrine of the Market-place the very next day. And Jesus would stop there even as He had tarried on the hillsides. In the noisy, busy, mighty, brave market-place He showed me a shrine that I had seen before but dimly. It was named the Shrine of the Unbounded Brotherhood. The shop-windows with their rich display were to me that day centers from which, through innumerable intricacies, ran lines of communication to the corners of the world, involving what abilities and dominions of man I could hardly conjecture, and suggesting as various needs. In the wide sweep of his activities, in the resistless might of his accomplishments, in the vast dimensions of his desires, and in the measureless variety of his needs—how like to God is man! “Sons of the Most

THANKSGIVING SHRINES

High," said the shop-windows to me that day. And this further: men dwelling at the ends of the earth from one another, and as far apart in race and customs, in philosophy and religion are still brothers by virtue of their giving and receiving.

The steady, purposeful, interrelated flitting of the shuttles of commerce, the intricately reciprocal movements of the great loom of business, the weaving of the many-colored threads of trade into one far-spread fabric of life, startled me anew with the consciousness of the universal reign of law, a dominion that bound us all together in a kind of inevitable fraternity. I discovered a tender pity in my heart for the man who was crushed because he did not know the law or forgot it. I was more grieved for those unwilling martyrs who through the very perfecting of the machinery of commerce and industry came into a heritage of misery. Still the vision I had of an infinitely complicated force moving ever upward toward "one far-off event," according to a law that never varies, not even through the pity of a Heavenly Father, gave me a deep sense, not so much of my personal security as of the safety of the race. In the midst of blunder and futile effort to conform to constantly

FESTIVAL SHRINES

changing conditions, out of toil and sweat and seeming accident I beheld brokenly through the scaffolding the edifice of the ultimate purpose of our God arising beautiful in its delicate fitnesses and sublime in its race-wide and age-long measures. On the cornerstone I was able, with the Master by my side, to read the inscription, The Commonwealth of Brothers. I saw a racial destiny uniting men in an all-inclusive fraternity.

My understanding grew as I saw men marching under the banner of a trades union, watched other men coming from a meeting of a manufacturers' association, read the names on the directorate of a huge corporation, and caught a glimpse of capital and labor working out a collective bargain called a wage-scale for a hundred thousand men. I found the symbol of it all in a buzzing, clanging factory, where a host of men worked at a thousand tasks that at the last would be welded into one product. This was but a microcosm, a miniature of that great interwoven world of work in which one man is served by a thousand, and in his turn serves a thousand. In my shrine I was able to see an ever-widening, self-chosen brotherhood of work in which each has his own task and in which all join together in producing Life.

THANKSGIVING SHRINES

I stood in the market-place among men. I watched their meetings and their partings; I listened to their agreements and their strifes; I heard their congratulations and their condolences. It was strangely given to me to see into their hidden lives. Their plans and hopes, their ambitions, their successes and their failures, their joys and their bitter sorrows, that which was in them of worthiness and that which soiled them with its own uncleanness,—all were revealed to me. Much that was ignoble I saw; but this I well-nigh forgot in the glory of nobility that shone from so many knightly lives. One man was fighting to maintain his business with his back against the wall, but he bore himself bravely and honorably. Some workmen came from a factory-gate that would not open in the morning, nor for many another morning. The wages had stopped, but the lads and lassies must eat still, and fuel and clothing must be bought and the rent paid. Yet they faced the trying search for work and the possible destitution with a laugh, and with mutual good wishes they parted and went their separate ways right bravely. A man walked down the street wondering whether the child he had left at the little home sick unto death still lived, and yet

FESTIVAL SHRINES

the friends whom he greeted found his voice only a little less merry and his smile only a little less bright than on other days. I saw men giving, too, to help another—poor men in a continual hand-to-hand struggle with sordid poverty giving to aid a wounded brother with a liberality that ought to make us all ashamed because we have so fulsomely praised those who, with all their munificent gifts, have never known a touch of self-denial, and because we have forgotten these who give their mites, all that they have, even their livings. So there came to me a great gladness. I saw beneath the hard hurry of the market-place a brotherhood of knightly hearts that forgot all things before honor and love and each other's needs. To my own heart came the memory of that incident of unexpected mercy on the Jericho road. It became to me, in that hour, more than an example—a prophecy of that unbounded brotherhood in which the hands and minds and hearts of all shall be joined together in bringing to pass the common good. With the Master I lifted up my eyes and saw God in that shrine hammering out His dream of the perfect brotherhood. The God of the silences, whose vast train filled all the temple of the hills, appeared to

THANKSGIVING SHRINES

me also as the God of the rattling market-place, where hosts of busy men were helping Him work out His Fatherly purpose.

On the first real winter night of that same November I found my Shrine of a Book. I had finished the work of the day; its problems had been laid aside till morning; the loved ones of the home had retired, and I was alone in the quiet enjoyment of such a delicious sense of freedom and ease as comes when one lays aside a heavy burden after bearing it for hours. Outside the wind howled, the driving snow bit viciously at the window-glass, the bare trees clashed their branches together; somewhere a loose board rattled; the bitter, savage night had its way. But in the room the wisdom of man had imprisoned somewhat of summer. The open fire glowed richly red; the incandescent filament sent a flood of brilliance from the study-lamp. The shade directed the radiance downward on the polished oak of the table, the book in my lap, and the rich red of the rug, and held it back from the upper corners of the room, where the soft shadows lay. The comfortable negligence of dress; the soft, firm embrace of the

FESTIVAL SHRINES

leather rocker ; the rich morocco, the smooth paper, the excellent typography of the book, the contrast between the calm brightness within and the stormy darkness without made the room seem like the land of the lotus-eaters, where it is always afternoon. With a long-drawn breath of ease I opened the book leisurely, and straightway there leaped out from the page a sword. I forgot the bitter night outside, the warm comfort within. The message of the book stabbed me wide awake. My eyes leaped from sentence to sentence ; my lips paled ; I almost forgot to breathe. The weapon from the book slashed through my wrappings of self-esteem, cut away my false confidence, showed me to myself in weakness and in dire peril, pierced to the dividing asunder of bone and marrow. I do not wisely call the message a sword, for it was not wielded by the hand of an enemy. Rather was it the keen lancet of the Divine Surgeon wherewith He excised from my soul a tumor that was fast becoming malignant. Before I closed the book I prayed intensely and with a clinging faith—and not without an answer. That Thanksgiving morning, as I looked again on the pages of the book, with the Master by my side, I understood far better than before what an utter-

THANKSGIVING SHRINES

most need it had met for me. So I bowed my head as I sat, and thanked God that He had led me to the Shrine of the Book.

Then the first notes of the great organ—rich, tender, and mighty—rose and swelled in harmonious grandeur, and my Savior and I came back to the window again. Our path had led through the whole year, ending where it began on that solemn festival morning. The twelvemonth had been wondrously glorified by His presence along its ways. I have told you of only a few of the shrines He showed me. Others there were and valleys of rest into which He led my tired feet, and peaks of glory from which He swept away the clouds. Now the master at the organ poured out his soul through its marvelous pipes. We heard the wind lisp through miles of prairie-grass; a host of meadow-larks called to one another in melodious confusion, and were answered by a multitude of blackbirds in full-rushing harmony. The rain pattered on the roof and tinkled on the lake; brooks laughed over their pebbles and cascades shouted above their boulders; seas called majestically from far away. We heard the mingled voices of many waters. Then

FESTIVAL SHRINES

the glory of the music rose higher. The organ shook, the walls trembled, the imprisoned air throbbed in a rapture of melody. The reverberation of distant thunder was heard; the voices of a singing multitude swelled ever louder; the jubilant anthems of the angelic host burst in billows of music over the parapets of heaven. A great choir articulated the speechless harmonies into the words of inspired verse. The marvels of science and of art united with devotion in the praise of God; but somehow, as the eyes of the pictured Christ looked right comradely into mine, and His hand pointed down the path we had just walked together, above all rose the silent praise of my heart to God, for on that wonderful morning He had brought me to the Shrine of the Window.

On the way home my friend remarked that the preacher was an able man; that the organ was very good; that the church would seat nearly a thousand, though the arrangement of the pews might be improved so as to increase its capacity; that some of the leads of the Emmaus window were loose. I held my peace.

CHRISTMAS-TIDE

THEY KNEW

O'ER little, lonely Bethlehem, this night,
So many weary centuries ago,
The music, pulsing now across the snow,
Hung trembling in the raptured air. The light
Of myriad beating angel-wings,—not bright,
But throbbing softly, one deep, tremulous glow,—
Ineffably encrowned the town below.
Its folk slept on, ears stopped, eyes sealed from sight.

The hour past. The Virgin's Babe was born.
The busy townsmen, rising with the day,
Spake of the cloud, the cold, the wind that blew;
They saw no glory save that of the morn;
Nor dreamed that angels came and went away.
The Babe and Mary and the shepherds knew.

CHRISTMAS-TIDE

CHRISTMAS-TIME is here. Frosty, happy, hurrying, enthusiastic Christmas-time! And we laugh with our friends, and give cordial greetings to mere acquaintances, and smile at strangers, and, most of all, our hearts get warm on the side next the children. We wish everybody .“Merry Christmas!”—a phrase that grows more sweet with multiplied reiteration. We jostle and are jostled in the crowded stores with all patience; we push our way through the stormy streets with imperturbable good nature; we warm our stiffened fingers before the dancing blaze at home with much merriment, holding the stalwart opinion that this is certainly the best season in the whole year.

True it is, we admit, that every month has hidden in its common cargo of days and nights some bit of choice freight peculiarly its own. January carries its bales of bright, new resolutions; February holds that queer piece of chronological elastic, by

FESTIVAL SHRINES

which men accommodate their calculations to the unyielding contrariness of Old Sol; March puffs his cheeks like a big schoolboy and romps and shouts, and then turns in his tracks, still like the boy, and gives us pussy-willows; April enjoys her quaint birthday so much that she keeps it for twenty-nine more with practical jokes of snow and hail and shine and shower; May is fragrant in her apple-blossoms; June has her wealth of "rare days" and fair brides and sweet girl-graduates; July reverberates with the Glorious Fourth; August brings full freightage of indolence, and we, being very lazy, follow Peter's example and go a-fishing—if we can; September overflows with her harvest-home, the fruitage and the vintage of the year; October is serenely glorious in her robes of Indian summer; November redeems her cold rains and her dreary east winds by bringing us the Pilgrim festival.

Then comes December. The frost pries its way through every crack, no less persistent because so obviously unwelcome. In the pasture the oaks stand stark and gaunt, stiffened by the biting cold; the dry weeds at the roadside rattle disconsolately, and the snow drifts into the fence-corners and between the furrows. A most inhospitable, harsh, and stingy

CHRISTMAS-TIDE

old miser of sunshine and gladness were December but that he brings us Christmas. This being indubitably so, we can forgive his bleakness, for it is the very fitting background for the fires of Yuletide. Think of Christmas in the midst of April's showers or August's blazing heat, or even set among the crimson and yellow drifts of October's falling leaves! Wholly out of keeping! What the holiday can be to those unfortunate folk who live south of the equator, where the summer comes in the winter-time, I really can not quite imagine; but the ancients who guessed the day lived this side the belt of the earth, and therefore fixed the festival where it belongs—in bleak December. We owe them thanks for their nice discrimination. So outside the wind howls; the frozen ground rings under the jarring wheels; the snow drives viciously against the hindering glass; the maples crack like rifles as the sap freezes in their veins; but inside are the glowing Christmas hearth, the tree glistening with candles and tinsel, and the tables bending under their abundance. Besides, the home-folks are all there gathering about the fire, exclaiming over the tree, thrilling with expectation, bursting with secrets, and, if it were possible, satiated with the joy of

FESTIVAL SHRINES

manifested love. Then it is no wonder that we at this season forget Athens and Rome and London and New York, and think only of little Bethlehem, whence Christmas came.

We love this Bethlehem holiday, as I have intimated, because it is the giving-time of the year. Those Wise Men who first celebrated the day were unaware that the thing they did in bringing gifts to the little Judean village was to be so widely imitated. Doers of great deeds are often so. But for two thousand years men have been following the custom set by the Magi, and of its increase there will be no end; for earth would be dreary, indeed, without this day, and even heaven, with Christmas left out, might well seem a poor exchange for cold December with its joyous holiday. These men from the East, then, brought gifts and made the Christmas-tide a giving time ever since, and so it will be, world without end. Let us all say "Amen."

And folks do give at this glad time of the year. With here and there the possible exception of some flinty-hearted, pitiable Old Scrooge, we fall into a most prodigal generosity, a blessed insanity of hilarious giving. Sometimes, indeed, unworthy gift-making intrudes itself, being of the flesh but not

CHRISTMAS-TIDE

of the spirit of Christmas. Some such presents are but for lavish display, which is in exceeding bad taste; some are duty-gifts, bought reluctantly, given grudgingly, tied in hard knots frowningly, compounded of hypocrisy and slavish convention; some are seed sown thriftily in good ground, from which is expected an abundant harvest, thirty, sixty, a hundred fold—a most contemptible and selfish desecration of the day. But go to, now. This is Christmas. Let these sink into disreputable oblivion, which is the only sanitary treatment of such garbage. So we will turn our thoughts right gladly to that other host of gifts, which no man can number, that are fragrant with self-forgetful love.

Fragrant with love—is it not a fitting phrase? The far-flung breath of apple-blossoms and of the sunset-hued clusters of peach-bloom, the redolence of basswoods and of clover-fields thronged with bees, the heavy perfume of the queenly rose and of the wealthy hyacinth, the delicate, almost ghostly fragrance of the gentle violet and the shy arbutus,—all these summerfuls of delightful odors burst forth as gifts are untied by fingers that tremble with loving expectancy. What matter whether the gift be a diamond or a penwiper! It is anointed, bathed,

FESTIVAL SHRINES

saturated with love. Whatever its price in the sordid market-place, to you it is infinitely precious for love's sweet sake. In the homes of the rich the stockings are crowded and the tables overflow with automobiles that run, and engines that puff, and dolls that talk, and jewels that sparkle in ever-changing hues, and books bound in morocco. In the home of the poor the lean little patched stockings have in them an apple or two, some raisins and nuts, a penny-whistle, and a rag doll. Mother gets a handkerchief, and father a book of shaving-paper. But these latter in their bare room keep Christmas as merrily as their neighbors in the mansion, for in both homes is a glory of love whose revealing is not limited by the monetary dimensions of a gift.

But, nevertheless, a real Christmas present must be costly. This is a suggestion of worth which we may find in the coming of the Wise Men with their gifts. Gold they had, and frankincense and myrrh in abundance. To give of these meant nothing of sacrifice to them. They must face the hardships and the perils of the long journey to the throne-room of the Kingly Babe that thus they might put something of themselves into their present, for what it bears of the giver is the true heart

CHRISTMAS-TIDE

of the gift always. That is the reason one turns carelessly from the expensive token, which was purchased easily and given thoughtlessly, to the coarse handkerchief with its wavering hem and its staggering stitches that cost the child who gave it hours of loving toil. What our gifts are matters very little. What they contain of the giver is of great concern. When "our ship comes in" we will not care much about its rig—whether it be bark or schooner or sloop—but we will want to know what cargo she bears to us. So let us pray that, when our Christmas ships sail into the harbor of this day, they may be deep-freighted with the very hearts of our friends wrought into a richness of thought and labor and sacrifice, for so comes Christmas Day to us. Or, if we would ask a nobler thing, let us entreat the One of Bethlehem for grace through which our outbound Yuletide vessels may be loaded with a like cargo to the water's edge, for from us in such a fashion should Christmas Day go forth.

Nor will we be unmindful of the sorts of presents we bestow. "What shall we give?" is in truth December's distinctive question. If, therefore, we pause long enough to look at the kinds of gifts the Wise Men brought we may find help in an-

FESTIVAL SHRINES

swering the query. They gave gold, for one thing—very practical stuff, and soon to be needed for that sudden Egyptian journey. Practical presents, that may be used, and used up, in the work and the wear of everyday life, have in their giving wisdom as well as love. A diamond pin would be of small value to a man without a shirt, and a gold ring would be a mockery on a hand transparent with semi-starvation. The instances may be extreme, but such kinds of ill-chosen gifts are common enough. We will do well to see that the unsentimental, homely thing which is able to lubricate the wheels of life is among the presents we give.

However, the overplus of a virtue may become a fault. We need to remember that for one practical gift the Wise Men gave two unpractical. Some hard-headed, forehanded old Bethlehemite—for there must have been such, albeit the village was not in New England—may have said, as did Judas on a somewhat similar occasion, "To what purpose is this waste? Frankincense and myrrh for a carpenter's Son, forsooth!" But what did Mary with these two bits of unnecessary luxury? To me it is an assured conclusion that long after the

CHRISTMAS-TIDE

gold was gone and the imperative need of it forgotten, she kept the other gifts sacredly, often looking upon their magnificence with joy. So they remained to her a little rose-garden hidden among the bare hills of her poverty till the day of His burial. Then, at the last, as she sadly thought, no other ointment or spice could serve so well for the body of her Son as these into which had been wrought the dreams and the memories of thirty years. So to-day it may be that a bit of luxury, a gift to be kept, not worn out, will let much sunshine into some gray life, being treasured through many years, till at the last it prove indispensable in a vast emergency. At Christmas-time, then, loving wisdom remembers that there are hearts hungering after a scrap of brightness for which there is no stern exigency, and it permits them to taste for once the joy of the unnecessary. With the gold we will give a little frankincense and myrrh.

Withal we should bear well in mind that the real gift is not the tangible thing that passes from hand to hand. That is but the symbol, the rough, worthless shell. And if we see only the shell at this season, then we are alms-givers and alms-takers,

FESTIVAL SHRINES

nor have we found our Christmas Day. The fragrance of which I have spoken, the deep heart-message, the soul of the token—these constitute the real gift, and therein is the tender glory of Christmas. What, then, of the gold, the frankincense, the myrrh? Leaving the givers out of mind, these are the messages of the gifts concerning the soul of our Yuletide. The gold tells us that a loyalty which shall abide untarnished till death and beyond, that an unenvious well-wishing that is ever ready to become well-doing, are gifts altogether worthy the Christmas-time. The frankincense, reminding us of temples and smoking censers and chanted worship, tells of the high honor in which we hold these friends of ours, the strong and solemn beauties of character which our hearts desire for them, and the prayers that rise year-long from our lips that so they may be

“every way,
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.”

The myrrh is just our love, an ethereal ointment gently soothing sore hearts, odorous with the sweet forgiveness of faults and sins, belonging most of all to the solemn hours of great events, and so

CHRISTMAS-TIDE

builded into the very foundations of life. Choice presents are these so far transcending their symbols that we are well-nigh unmindful of the material gift, the mere wooden casket, while we look with glad eyes on the precious jewels of good wishes and loyalty, of honor and prayers, of tender, healing love.

But would you know the best of all? Then listen! The Wise Men brought gifts—let us say it very quietly and briefly as men tell the supremest happenings of life—they brought gifts to the Christ. And—we must whisper it for our great gladness—so may we. To Him who gives so lavishly and lovingly of His gold and frankincense and myrrh, with their infinitely various significance; to Him who is so awful in His supreme holiness that we worship Him as God, yet so simple in His loving-kindness that we talk with Him as with a familiar friend; to Him, so persuasive in His perfect symmetry and in His boundless love that He has made the cross—a shameful instrument of ignominious death—into The Cross, the badge of all high honor—we may give gifts to Him. And He uses, He needs, the gold of our service, the frankincense of

FESTIVAL SHRINES

our worship, the myrrh of our charity. Still more,
He rejoices in the loyalty and the honor and the
love that we lay at His feet on this birthday of
His, the day which we have made our great festival
of giving and of joy. Sing, my heart, for this best
of the blessed Christmas-tide!

EASTER MIRACLES

GOD'S GUEST

"He has gone to be a guest of God."

The house has been so empty since he went,
The whole wide world of work and play
So vacant seems and lonesome since—
He went away.

I can not find content.
For, if I work, my heart will stray
Past idle hands and task undone
Back to the happy labor of that day
Ere he had gone.

And, if I smile,
Beguiled by music or the sound
Of merry voices mixed in mirth,
My lonely heart aches hard the while,
For I remember on the whole round earth
He is not found.

"Gone," did some one say,
"To be a guest?" Before he went away,
It was a joy to him to be a guest—
Or host: it mattered not at all,
If but his smile and merry jest
Found answer in the kindling face
Of host or guest.

So, if the call
That drew him hence and left me sad
Has only led him to some gracious place
Of friendliness, where one shall smile and take
His hand with welcome warm, I shall be glad,
Just for his sake.

But in my heart I know
That in the genial warmth he misses me;
That with each rustling welcome at the door
He turns with eager, wistful glance to see
If I am come. So I will weep no more
Until I go.

For sometime I shall go
To be a guest with him. But where?
I had not thought save just to be with him,
To hear his voice, to touch his hand, and there,
Somewhere beyond life's sunset rim,
To be with him.

"God's guest!" Why, so
Will be great joy to him. For he
Loved God. "God's guest!" I can not weep.
For now I know he did not die,
He is not dead. He fell asleep—
He was so tired, and he longed for rest—
And, when he wakened by and by,
He was God's guest.

Smiles after tears
Shine out. Some glad day I shall see
His face, and He will be through all the years
God's guest—with me.

EASTER MIRACLES

IT is Easter-time, and miracles abound. Miracles, I said, and with somewhat of deliberation; for, if we will but open our eyes, the superabundance of the miraculous will press upon us till we see not one burning bush, but every common thing radiant with the presence of God. It will be very well if to our unsealed vision the passing day with all its ordinary freight be dignified by this august presence of the Almighty. It will prove far better if, through continued indwelling and abiding, the secret places of God and the shadow of the Almighty become very familiar to us.

With Divine appropriateness the Easter-tide comes in the springtime. The age-old prophecy and symbol of the resurrection is spring. To people who think and feel the vernal renewal of the pulse of life never becomes commonplace. Always there abides in it a wonder that grows rather than diminishes with its repetition. We have so little to do in the matter, save to stand and look, that even our garden-hoes seem to be transformed into awk-

FESTIVAL SHRINES

ward but very mighty wands, and we become magicians than which there are no greater. For, see: we only stir the ground and drop into it little round pellets or light-pointed shells with a mystery of life in the heart of each, or big flat seeds or bulbs or tubers; and then, by and by, out of the damp earth, warmed with the sunshine of April, comes a bit of green that reaches upward and spreads outward into a blade or a leaf after its kind. So forth from its tiny house bursts the plant, stem and leaf and flower and fruit and seed again. We wonder unspeakably that it all could have been crowded with such incredible compactness into so small a compass. We marvel at the impulse and the power revealed in its unrolling. We are amazed that the rootlets should so unerringly seek the depths, while the blade turns to the heights. The fashion in which the destiny wrought into the seed leaps, at the caress of the rain and the kiss of the sun, into the formal expression of parental likeness is to us a continual mystery of mysteries. This alchemy of growth, when we stop to think of it, makes us look about our quite ordinary garden whispering with the awe that Jacob knew, "Surely, God is in this place, and I knew it not."

EASTER MIRACLES

Nor is the Miracle of Spring exhausted in its fundamental fact of stirring life. The multitudinous variety of this life is in itself a miracle. The same soil hides the roots, the same water moistens their thirsty mouths, the same breeze kisses the leaves of an infinitely varied host of growing things. There, at the foot of the hill, a great oak lifts its sturdy boughs over the tender grass, the tufted moss, the yellow adder's-tongue, the timid violet, the faintly-perfumed hepatica, and the blue, white, and pink-blossomed mayflower. At one edge of the sweep of its branches the buttercup shines in its yellow enamel on the brink of the pool, while at the other, under the clump of little pines, a leathern-leaved, waxen-belled arbutus hides shyly away. Beyond this crowd of differences lies the great world of rooted things that grow—from the mighty California redwood to its miniature, the mare's-tail, in the barren spots. So limited is the genius of man that he must needs stamp his signature on his work in certain fashions of doing. The picture, the symphony, the poem, the story, the oration, every bit of handiwork has in it a certain individuality, a kind of likeness to all other work coming from the mind or the hand of the same worker. But

FESTIVAL SHRINES

in this God is vastly different. His work has ever in it an infinite variety. In color, in form, in size, in relation the manifested thoughts of God in their manifold differences indicate the inexhaustible resources of the Divine genius. And this is no small part of the Miracle of Spring.

But the greatest wonder of Spring is that it should stir us to wonder at all. Why should we not be unconscious of its mystery and of its significance? Who are we, that we set ourselves up to be critics, albeit favorable ones, of the ways and the works of the Most High? Is it not, indeed, a sign of a noble past and a nobler future that we are at all aware of the distances of those unexplored regions out of which every blade of meadow grass, every leaf of forest tree, every friendly roadside flower calls to us so alluringly in the springtime? That we can wonder shows that our ignorance is superficial, of our infancy, not of our mature nature. So, while we rejoice in the wine of spring sunshine and stand in silent awe before its miracle of renewed life and lose ourselves in wonder at the deeper meanings that beckon to us from the doors of its mysteries, we are amazed most of all that we are able to marvel at this whole primeval Mir-

EASTER MIRACLES

acle of the Easter-tide. We somehow feel that the physical in Spring is permeated with a vaster spiritual. Lowell sets this chord throbbing in our souls by his suggestion in his well-known verse that the activities of Spring are to be predicated not of things, but of a person. With him we project into the very clod this music of the spiritual that trembles in our souls.

“Whether we look or whether we listen,
We hear life murmur or see it glisten;
Every clod feels a stir of might,
An instinct within it that reaches and towers,
And, groping blindly above it for light,
Climbs to a soul in the grass and the flowers.”

Softly the overtones of that music whisper to us wondrous things about a divinity that dwells in ourselves and is part of us. So death loses its grimness and the grave its hopelessness and the future its barren blankness, and so, not by any hard-built logic, but by the sweet persuasions and the warm assurances that blossom with the violets and the daffodils as bright and rich as they, do we catch some glimpse of the life that waits us just past our rainy vernal equinox. At this Easter-tide, then, we will thank God for the Miracle of the Spring.

FESTIVAL SHRINES

The second marvel of Easter is the Miracle of the Garden. There happened that supernatural event which, seen in the perspective of the centuries, seems the only natural sequence of the preceding life. But I will not at this time speak of the primary fact of the Resurrection, but rather of its evidences in the words and deeds of those who were immediately touched by it, for every truth comes into our knowledge through its relations to tangible facts. We know the coming of spring through the grass and the flowers; we know love through caresses and sacrifices; we know conversion through the changed face and the reformed life; we know the Resurrection through the words and deeds and lives that flowed forth from it like streams which come out of a fountain in the desert and make fruitful fields in the midst of a wilderness.

First of all, then—that we may be done with it and turn to things more pleasing—is the proof of the miracle in its denial. The incredible explanations of the alleged consequences of a fact in question offered by those who deny it, are often the best evidences of its truth. Thrust this question at your wise, superior skeptic, “If this, which is undeniable, be not caused by that which you deny, then, in your

EASTER MIRACLES

turn, tell me its real cause." While he flounders in the superstitions of science, falsely so called, your own faith will be strengthened. When the soldiers at the tomb must give an account for the absence of the body that they were set to guard, they, taught by the priests, said, "His disciples came by night, while we slept, and stole it away." These were Roman soldiers, inured to all the hardships of war, and yet, without being exhausted by marching or fighting, they slept. They were under the severest military discipline, still they brought upon themselves the sentence of death because they slept. There were at least two on guard, but they both slept at the same time. On an unusual duty, in the fearful precincts of a graveyard, watching against the fulfillment of a startling prophecy, they slept. And while they slept they saw the disciples come and take away the body! What better proof of the Resurrection do we ask than this absurdity of explanation on the part of those who were set to guard against any imposture? And those who through the centuries have tried to explain Easter away have succeeded only in multiplying incredibilities. They have turned from a mystery of unfathomed power, like which there are many about

FESTIVAL SHRINES

us, to a contradictory mass of intellectual confusion. It may be possible that to these an atrophy of intellect in this particular has happened, so that they are become incapable of perceiving this truth or its evidence, but for the rest of us Easter Day abides.

In this composite Miracle of the Garden there are those other sweeter wonders. There was the healing of the broken hearts, and I think that our Comrade would like us to put that first, as He did. Mary came into the garden through the misty dawn, seeking where they had laid her Lord, in order that she might show to His poor, wounded body, now mercifully free from the thorn-crown and the nails, those last tokens of love which men so pathetically bestow on the abandoned tenements of their beloved. So she came to the tomb, and it was empty. Not content to crucify her Master, they must now bear His precious body away from her care to what humiliation she knew not. So she thought, in heart-broken fashion. It was not the mist of the morning that blinded her eyes when One approached who, she thought, was the gardener. Through her tears she lifted up her pitiful cry, "Where have you laid Him?" The single word "Mary" was the eloquent reply, and, brushing away her tears, she

EASTER MIRACLES

looked up and knew Him, and fell in loving worship at His feet. With sobs and laughter mingled she cried, "My Master!" But for His restraint, she would have kissed the wounds in His feet which the ragged spike had made. The rains were over and gone, and the time of the singing of birds was come in the heart of Mary. She, who went into the garden weeping under the shadow of the passion, came out rejoicing in the glory of the first Easter.

Another broken heart was healed at no great time later. Peter, notwithstanding all his honors and service and boasting, had denied the Christ in the most aggravated manner, in spite of warnings—openly, repeatedly, angrily denied Him. Since that unhappy hour shame had been eating at his heart. If only he could have the opportunity to say to Him, "I am sorry," to ask His forgiveness, to do before Him some heroic deed, and so prove his repentance and renewed loyalty. But now it was too late; for that beloved Friend was dead and, whatever others might do for Him, he who had been one of the inner circle must stand forever outside; his name must be coupled with that of Judas. Then somewhere on that Easter day, in

FESTIVAL SHRINES

a place too hallowed to be named, Jesus came to him, and with words too sacred ever to be repeated his dear Master gave him the assurance of forgiveness. Into the room where the others were gathered burst Peter out of the blackness of his midnight, wearing a radiant morning face and shouting with jubilation: "I have seen Him! I have seen Him!" In such a blessed fashion Peter found his Easter; for what other than a resurrection could have brought peace and joy to the shamed heart of this fisherman?

Then there was the wonder of doubt leaping into faith. Easter brimmed over the edge of the Garden, flowed into the Upper Room, and found Thomas there. Now, Thomas was a constitutional skeptic, a man who always insisted on the margin of proof, a kind of Galilean Scotchman. Mary's shining face did not convince him; the story of the women and the message from the angels did not lead him into belief; Peter's glory of soul was not sufficient evidence. He must see Him, put his fingers into the prints of the nails, his hand into the wounded side before he would believe. To him, then, came the Christ; the pierced palms extended and the wounded side uncovered were open to his test, and with one

EASTER MIRACLES

bound he sprang from the dull hopelessness of "I will not believe" into the joyous faith of "My Lord and my God!" So came Easter to Thomas.

Nor may we forget the wonderful transformation of the fear which hid behind locked doors into the courage which boldly charged the rulers of the nation with murder and trembled not at death. The disciples expected much of Jesus in their blind, material way. Even when the dangers thickened and His enemies crowded Him toward the hill, notwithstanding His positive words of warning and His evident agony, they still were so sure that it was just the hour before dawn that, in Gethsemane itself, the inner circle yielded to sleep. Then He was seized, and they fled; He was condemned, and no angels came to His rescue; He was crucified, and though the heavens and the earth were moved at the tragedy, yet He died, and the disciples themselves laid Him in Joseph's new tomb. From the height of their boundless expectations they fell confusedly to the depths of utter discouragement. "They trusted"—observe the past tense, as of hope ended—"that He had been the one to restore the kingdom to Israel." In their bewilderment they hid themselves in a locked room till they

FESTIVAL SHRINES

might safely slip out of the city and find their way back to the dullness of the old life now so sadly empty since they had known Him. Then came Easter and the forty days' communion and the dynamic of the Spirit. So they went forth, facing all ridicule and hatred and persecution and martyrdom, courageously declaring the truth, which burned its way out of³ their hearts, that this same Jesus whom the leaders of the people had crucified was risen from the dead, and so was the Messiah. They did not assert His resurrection because of His Messiahship, but His Messiahship because of His resurrection. This was their continual message: "And the third day He rose from the dead. Must not this Jesus, then, be the Christ of God?" This glad news drove them through all the land proclaiming the miracle of Easter as the very heart of their evangel till, one by one, they fell asleep in Him. No adequate motive for such hardy boldness, such joyous sacrifice, can be found save in the fact of the resurrection. So grief became joy, and the lashings of a guilty conscience gave way to a surpassing peace, and doubt was lost in high faith, and trembling timidity was transformed into armed courage.

EASTER MIRACLES

These glories interwoven became the Miracle of the Garden at Easter time.

Not least in wonder among these marvels is the Easter Miracle of Words. Now, a word is the crystallized essence of many experiences. This is emphatically true of the great terms in our speech. To the landsman who has never caught the wind fresh off the wide water the word "sea" means little more than an extended duckpond, but to the sailor the term is a symbol of varied and wonderful experiences. There is in it a panorama of motion, from the sparkling dance of the ripples and the long, lazy lift of the swell to the headlong rush of huge billows, whipped with flying spray, and the tumbling cascades of breakers tripping on the bars in their haste to reach the shore and falling into thunder and foam. In it there runs back and forth a riot of color from the blackness of the midnight water through the grays and greens and blues and purples of dawn and noon and twilight to the silvery sheen that the moon makes on the calm sea and to the white ghost on the crests of fleeing waves. A multitude of voices hide for him in the word,

FESTIVAL SHRINES

from the whisperings of the breeze-ruffled ocean to the calling of strong winds and the shouting of boisterous seas as they romp together. It becomes obvious that a great word without an adequate reality back of it is a sign lacking significance, an implement without a use, an effect without a cause.

We use not a few words into which Easter has poured a vastly larger meaning. They have been transmuted into gold by its alchemy. Among them are the radiant symbols: hope, faith, assurance, immortality, heaven, love, loyalty, comradeship. Of these I will not speak, but rather of two others which through the generations stood opposed, each to each, in unremitting battle till Easter made them allies, the one mightier through the ages becoming the servant of the weaker. Life and death yield themselves to the peaceful sunshine of Easter.

We do well to consider the wonder for a little. From the day on which Cain stood looking down on the bruised and breathless body of his brother lying unmoved by all the world about him and impotent to so much as bend a grass-blade, until the first Easter, there abode in the heart of man a sense of the terrifying antithesis between life and death. Here about him lay the sunny highland of

EASTER MIRACLES

life with its bright activities and enjoyments, its self-consciousness, and its warm familiarity. There, somewhere, unseen until its brink crumbled beneath his feet, waited the black chasm of death, and beyond it nothing, or dreams of weird and fearful experiences, a place of shadows and of uncertainties. Job could be sure of nothing more than rest from the multiplied woes of his trial, and the psalmist wrote, "The dead praise not the Lord, neither do any that go down into the darkness." The ancient preacher exclaimed of life when the shadow of death fell upon it: "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!" The Greeks made their deity of death altogether terrible with hour-glass and scythe, waiting to cut down inexorably him whose sand should next run out. The Romans wrote on their tombs, "Farewell, farewell; forever farewell!" The African woman, weeping in the bush, wailed out her despair to the kindly bishop who found her there: "My baby is dead, and I will never see it again!" So the day of life was ever shadowed with the ominous night of death.

Then came Easter. We thought life a lane ending yonder at the grave; but now we know that it is a great highway sweeping round the

FESTIVAL SHRINES

bend called death, and ever on and on. We thought it a land-locked lake; but now we see that it is a bay and flows through an unseen channel round the end of what seemed its farther shore into the vast ocean. We thought the whole home of man was in this one little, frail hut; but we learn now that this body is but the lodge at the gate, and beyond, in our Father's Paradise, are many palaces. The Easter sunshine has not only boundlessly increased our measure of life, but has greatly enriched its quality, for by it divinity is wrought into its fabric. It multiplies life's meanings as we see the years which we now have woven into the centuries that await us. Thus does life become very august, since it is a time of beginnings, of choosing directions, of determining destinies; and it becomes very glorious, for all its activities are allied with the work of God. When the radiance of the empty tomb shone upon Death, that huge, spectral event, draped with black robes of horror and of woe, dwindled to the dimensions of an incident. It became a turn in the road, the first hurdle in the race, the door into the other room, a night's sleep, a crossing of a stream, a change of garments. Paul answers Job, "It is better to be absent from the

EASTER MIRACLES

body and present with the Lord." Over against the darkness and the silence of the grave in the wail of the psalmist stands the apostle's triumphant cry, "O Grave, where is thy victory?" To the preacher of pessimism, John the seer makes reply, "They shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it," and, "There shall be no night there." The Greek god of death is replaced by the shining angels whom the women saw at Joseph's tomb. Opposite the Roman inscription is carved the Christian, "In Christ, in peace, in hope." And when the good bishop told the woman in the jungle the story of Easter, she laid her babe in the earth with a glad hope shining through her tears. Instead of weird, grief-laden dirges wailed over the graves of our loved ones, we chant triumphantly: "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live;" and then we sing softly, "Asleep in Jesus, blessed sleep." Dr. Babcock reveals very beautifully the overthrow of black death by shining Easter in his lines:

"Why be afraid of death, as though your life were breath?
Death but anoints your eyes with clay. O glad surprise!
Why should you be forlorn? Death only husks the corn.
Why should you fear to meet the thresher of the wheat?"

FESTIVAL SHRINES

Is sleep a thing to dread? Yet sleeping you are dead,
Until you wake and rise here or beyond the skies.
Why should it be a wrench to leave your wooden bench?
Why not with happy shout run home when school is out?
The dear ones left behind? O foolish, one and blind!
A day and you will meet—a night and you will greet.
This is the death of death, to breathe away a breath
And know the end of strife and taste the deathless life
And joy without a fear and smile without a tear
And work nor care to rest and find the last the best."

As the Christ on the Excellent Mount was transfigured until even His garments became like woven sunbeams, so in the Garden Life becomes celestial in new meanings and Death appears as the tall angel of God clad in robes of glory. These words in this miracle of their transformation show how large a place Easter has made for itself in our speech.

How shall we tell in few words the Miracle of Easter in the lives of men and in the life of the world? Napoleon once, in an hour of insight, said: "Alexander, Charlemagne, and I have founded empires. But on what have we built the creations of our genius? On sheer force. Jesus alone has founded His empire on love, and to-night millions would die for Him." This utterance of the great

EASTER MIRACLES

Corsican is deeply true, but it does not compass the whole truth. It does, however, suggest it. Men may willingly sacrifice their lives for the living, but they do not die for the dead. They may believe the precepts of Socrates, honor the morality of Marcus Aurelius, feel their hearts warmed into love by the sweet and sturdy simplicity of Abraham Lincoln; but none are ready to die that the stories of these lives should be spread throughout the whole world; few would choose martyrdom rather than disloyalty to the names of any of these men. But because Easter came into the Garden, and because men realize that the Christ of Galilee and of Calvary still lives as tender and as strong as ever, they are ready to lay down their lives for Him. To all His martyrs He is the living Friend to whom they must in no manner be untrue. He is our Captain, and Him we love, to Him we will be loyal, and for Him, if need be, we will even dare to die; for, "Lo, He is with us alway."

Men die for Him and, more wonderful still, they live for Him. Not in the exaltation of a supreme deed of sacrifice done once for all, not in sudden flaming courage of an hour, but in the steady strain of a constant battle stretching wearily through

FESTIVAL SHRINES

the years, in the continual repetition of small sacrifices, in the dull obscurity of daily routine men and women are forgetting themselves in their love and devotion to Him. Their abiding patience, their unwavering loyalty, their unabating zeal manifest the radiance of a devotion not to one who lived and is dead, but to a supremer One, who lives for evermore. Nor are these who thus live for Him weak creatures with a preponderance of untrained imagination. They are men of will and mind and power. Some one has said: "Do you ask if Jesus Christ is a strong man? See the strong men He has conquered." Men of primal strength, like blind Samson, chained to heartless drudgery and prisoned in unlovely surroundings, and there, with brawny arms and rough hands, doing the world's harsh work, crude and hard and mighty, have found in His fellowship and service a Bethel ladder down which come into their lives angels of a very genuine refinement, of high ideals, and of true nobility. Such a conquest is not the victory of a mere name, but of One that lives. It is a Miracle of Easter.

With these are the favored ones of earth: men whose days are filled with pleasant tasks, who are environed with comfort and with beauty, to whom

EASTER MIRACLES

in fullest measure come the privileges of this life. Such men, lifted out of themselves by the vision of His face, find in His service their supremest joy and go gladly along the ways of men, following His steps of toil and sacrifice and bearing something of His compassion. Who but a living Master could thus command them from their feasts and their pleasures?

Beside them are men who know the higher joy of doing great deeds: masters of art and of science, kings of statecraft and captains of industry, strong men, Sauls who stand head and shoulders above their fellows. These bow the knee of homage full willingly to the Carpenter and pledge themselves His vassals with their strong hands between His pierced palms. The power of a risen Lord of men masters them.

Do we ask if Jesus is a strong man? See the weak men whom He has made strong. The fact of conversion laughs to scorn all psychology that makes no account of it; for here we find a man born of evil parentage and so turned squarely toward ruin by heredity. He is reared in the underworld and so hurried on his way to destruction by environment. Half his life is spent in vice and

FESTIVAL SHRINES

crime, and thus he is fettered by the might of habit to a hopeless destiny. All the precepts of wise moralists, all the warnings of stern prophets, all the high ideals of pure-hearted saints are but straws to him, caught in the turbulent current of his life. But one day this man of sin calls on the name of Jesus, and his heritage of evil and his education of sin and his practice of vice become but threads of tow to the mighty power that bursts into his life. He is converted, transformed, glorified. Nor is this change merely apparent, a passing ecstasy, a will-o'-the-wisp glittering illusively for a moment over the morass of his hopelessness. He finds himself living a new life in the strength of Jesus Christ. Beside such a resurrection of a soul and such an abiding of spiritual life the rising of a dead body to fullness of physical life is an incident not specially worthy of note. But many such wrecks, stranded on the shoals of sin, grinding on the reefs of vice, caught in the maelstroms of moral ruin, have been saved by Him and brought into the calm, deep channels of life. These never question the Resurrection. They know the Easter in the Garden by the more wonderful Easter in their hearts.

This is a Christian civilization because the evan-

EASTER MIRACLES

gel of Christ so largely determines the standards of morality, furnishes the high ideals, and reveals the satisfying hopes that persist in it. This message finds its way into society at large, fundamentally, through the preaching and teaching and singing of the Church. We may give the fullest credit to all those other institutions that are extending and applying the word; yet it remains undeniably true that the Church is the great power-house of our civilization. But the dynamo of the Church is Easter Day. If it were conclusively shown that Jesus did not arise from the dead, the whole fabric of the Church would come crashing about our ears. Its form might for a little time continue as the shape of a burned bit of wood sometimes still shows in the ashes; but the Church so left without its Easter would be but ashes, to dissolve at a touch. A dead Master would not be able to command our lives with supreme authority, nor could He save us from our sins, nor would His promise of the life to come be convincing, nor could such a one by any means be a supremely inspirational example. Then would come to pass the hopeless alternative of the apostle's thought: "But if Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain and your

FESTIVAL SHRINES

faith is also vain. Then they, also, who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." If He be not risen, there is no glad news to tell, no victorious King to crown, no living Comrade to love. He can only be remembered by the few as a Man too good for His generation, and so crucified; a teacher whose doctrines failed the ultimate test of experiment; a dreamer of beauteous dreams—but only a dreamer. In such a case our civilization could be Christian neither in name nor in distinctive characteristics. The marvelous leavening power of Jesus in society is not the waning influence of one who failed, an innocent victim of death; but the waxing power of One who succeeds, death's conqueror. Our Christian civilization is an unquestionable Miracle of Easter.

The constant Miracle of Spring was the prophecy of the Easter that was to be, and is the symbol of the Easter that has been and is forever. The miracle of gladness in the faces of Mary and Peter, in the triumphant shout of Thomas, in the boldness of the reanimated disciples, finds its only possible source in Easter. The miracle wrought in our common speech, by which the black god of death

EASTER MIRACLES

has been transformed into the white-robed, fair-faced angel of our Father come to lead us into one of His other rooms, and by which the monosyllable "life" was made to stand for infinite meanings, must find its philosophy in the dawn of that day which brought fear to the soldiers and glory to the hearts of Jesus' friends. The manysided miracle in the lives of men and in the life of man can find no adequate account of itself save in the Risen One.

“SUNSET AND EVENING STAR”

OUT ON THE RANGE

JIM'S girl—

For I saw her, you know,
Twice, only twice, in the long ago—
Had a single, willful, shining curl
That never would stay
With the rest, as it ought,
But rippled apart.
So it chanced one day,
As he was recklessly galloping down
The long, gray trail, in its coil it caught
And held Jim's heart.
For out on the range, they say,
Folks fall in love in the same strange way
That they do in town.

A lazy breeze that wonderful day
Had just slipped down from the blue-veiled hills
And loitered along in a careless way,
Whispering over old memories:
Sometimes about great solemn trees;
Sometimes of the silent dusk that fills
The higher cañons; of drifts that weep,
Lonesome for comfort, till up from their sleep
Flowers come star-eyed; of sage-covered slopes
Lifting prayers all pungent with desperate hopes—
As of those who ever fight hard against odds—
To the cloud-bannered peaks where the wilderness gods
Dwell ever under a sky-roof blue.

The breeze kissed the curl.
Then Jim leaped down
And, standing there by her horse's side—
The valley lay quiet, empty, and wide—
She stooped a bit and—he kissed the girl.
And what would you have him do?
For folks on the range, they say,
Tell their love in the same dear way
That they do in town.

The breeze wandered away,
The days drifted past,
And each one seemed to out-brim the last
With a strange, new joy to Jim.
A tender glory each hour lay
On the lava black and the sage-brush gray
And crowned the hilltops far away;
So he sang, for the world was fair to him.

Then a messenger came, hot with desperate speed;
One word, and Jim was up and away.
The long trail, narrow, sinuous, gray,
Leaped swiftly back from his horse's feet—
It was life or death Jim rode to meet.
He knew the hot pace, but he seemed to creep,
For his heart's thick pulsing measured each leap
That brought him nearer her uttermost need.
The day was dark when he stood by her side;
Gloom filled the cañons, the valley wide
Mourned in shadows, the breeze was still.
On the white forehead the golden curl
Lay unshaken. Jim bent down
And tenderly kissed the silent girl.
He sobbed as sometimes rough men will;
For out on the range, they say,
Death comes in the same relentless way
That it does in town.

Now Jim rides slow
Over the hills as the years pass by.
The trail and the sage and the arch of the sky
Change not. But each year finds Jim
Riding slower and slower yet,
Silent and stern, with mouth grim set;
For a grave in the valley down below
Holds all in the world that is dear to him;
For out on the range, they say,
Men's hearts break in as bitter a way
As they break in town.

“SUNSET AND EVENING STAR”

ABOUT each of our commoner flowers are clustered the memories of its own day. Lilies hold Easter for their peculiar possession; carnations suggest the congratulatory bustle of graduations; roses recall old banquets or, it may be, the dewy twilights in which were said those first love-vows which seem now so foolish and so precious; the queenly plumes of goldenrod tell of harvest festivals. But the lilacs, in their white or lavender masses, with their heavy perfume, bring to our saddened eyes visions of Memorial Day. Likewise each holiday has its distinctive form and color in our thought. The Fourth of July is boisterous with effervescent patriotism; Thanksgiving has in it the firelight of home-comings and the greetings of love; Christmas is full to the brim and running over with all manner of dancing expectations and laughing surprises; there is about New Year's Day a sense of newness—as if it had

FESTIVAL SHRINES

rained hard over night and the air had been washed clean; the glory of heavenly hopes and the vast surging of eternal life breaks Easter into splendid fragments of wonder. But the breath of the lilacs quiets our laughter and halts our hurrying activities and makes our hearts tender with a sad yearning that is not all painful. We stand still for an hour and look back wistfully over the way we have come. We remember the other days and the faces now gone from among men, and we sigh

For the touch of a vanished hand
And the sound of a voice that is still."

The others, perhaps, are holidays. Memorial Day is a holy day. Its hours are sacred, each one a great translucent pearl, because once it was filled to overflowing with tears. They have ceased, for they fell, it may be, long ago; but we have not forgotten, and the hours are all richly gray with the soft sheen of old sad memories. It is a holy day, and a halo of purity and of worthiness is about it, and a certain majesty, for we are thinking of those who have passed from the dust and the murk of our sin-touched life into a cleaner air; we are remembering those who have received the coronation of death.

“SUNSET AND EVENING STAR”

Heavenly visitors seem to stand just outside the too palpable veil of the flesh, and

“Angel-faces smile,
Which we have loved long since, and lost awhile.”

Being such a day, if we have any sense of the fitness of things, we do not try to reason about it or its contents. That were to err, to desecrate the day, to show far too plainly our kinship to the insensate clod. We must look and feel and remember and meditate and dream and see visions and invite the Presence of God. And, if you weary not, you and I will do just this for a little time this Memorial Day, with the breath of the lilacs about us: we will cast aside all dull reasonings and bid logic be gone; we will just look and, perchance, see; open our hearts and, it may be, feel the deeper movings of life; lift up the gates of our souls, and who knows but God will come in? If this be so, then will the fragrance of the lilacs be precious to us and the day be very holy for evermore.

Far down the street rolls the sudden rattle of the snare-drum, then the boom of the bass-drum, and in an instant the whole band pours out its

FESTIVAL SHRINES

mingled harmonies, all wrought into stirring but solemn martial music. The magic of the trumpet-call and the drum-beat lays its mighty hand upon us. We look about and long for some heroic thing to do. So we somewhat understand how men on hard marches or in the horror of battle forget themselves in the beating glory of such strains, but we are more mystified than ever why this should be. The music swells, the musicians march briskly along, conscious of the watching eyes and the listening ears and rejoicing in the gladness that always attends the doing of a thing by the harmonious massing of various individual activities. We remember that God made us "workmen together." The warmth of a great comradeship glows in our hearts, and we highly resolve that henceforth we will call men brothers a little more significantly; that we will do our small tasks with a bit more care; that we will cause no discord in the splendid harmony of the world's work. With a sudden lift, as though on a mighty surge of recollection, we recall that God said we were to be workers with Him. That is too wonderful. Our very faces glow with the marvel of it. Our poor strains are to be wrought, not into the melodies of the world alone, but into

“SUNSET AND EVENING STAR”

the infinite music of the universe. We no longer wish for the chance to do a great deed. The common chores of everyday are become very great since we touch shoulders with God in their doing. We no more look for the heroic things to do, but are determined now to do the common thing heroically.

But the band is past, and we see the “boys in blue” march by. Our hearts swell with admiration and are like to break with pity. These are the men who in their country’s direst need shook hands with their fathers in a new sense of manhood, bent their heads on their mothers’ shoulders and stood long in their embraces, kissed the tear-stained and fear-paled cheeks of their sweethearts, and then went forth to hardship and peril, and, for aught they knew, to death. These are the men who pushed their way into the murky swamps of the Wilderness when it crackled with musketry and roared with the discharge of cannon and the burst of shell. Or they are those who stood at Gettysburg unmoved by the crashing of the artillery that played for hours upon their entrenchments, undismayed by the long, gray line of Pickett’s men moving forward with a veteran courage that seemed irresistible. It may be that these men were with Sheridan when he

FESTIVAL SHRINES

turned defeat into victory at Cedar Creek, or with Sherman when, cut off from all communication, he pushed his way through the heart of the Confederacy, or with Grant in the battering of Petersburg. Wherever they were, they faced grim death again and again. It was no fault of theirs that they did not fall in the terrible crash of battle or perish miserably in Andersonville or Libby. These men, then, are heroes—these whom we see every day about our streets. There is one who is a carpenter. We saw him shingling a house the other day. This one is a grocer. Last week we bought a box of crackers from him. This other drives a dray and hauls baggage from the depot. Yesterday they were all our common townsmen, but to-day the memory of high achievements crowns each with the laurels of a hero. And a hero each one is; and whatever he may do of everyday work, he will never be other. It is a little wonderful to live in a house built by a hero, and to buy groceries of a hero, and to have a trunk taken across town by still another hero. The dust of yesterday and its common work made us forget, but to-day we remember and do them honor with full hearts. This further. We perceive that heroes are but common

“SUNSET AND EVENING STAR”

folk after all. We are surprised at the obvious fact. Then its corollary is apparent, and we feel a thrill in our hearts. We, being but common folk, may yet be heroes.

So, filled with admiration and all high emotion, we look at these heroes again, and our eyes grow moist. They marched forth to battle with firm step and back-thrown shoulders and clear eyes, in the full strength of their unbroken young manhood. Now they pass along the road to the decoration of their comrades' graves with feeble step and shoulders bent under the burden of the years and eyes dimmed with age, in the tottering weakness of their last days. They can't keep step any more, for one limps with rheumatism and one shambles with a touch of paralysis, and one, weakly tired with the unusual march of a mile, lags a little behind. They are all glad to halt at last in the coolness of the quiet God's Acre, where lie the soldier-dead of the country-side. The old commands that once rang out so clearly are uttered quaveringly to-day, for the voices that were so strong then are weak now through the much laughter and the much sobbing of the years. They blunder sometimes in the reading of the solemn ritual of the hour; for the eyes

FESTIVAL SHRINES

that were so clear are dimmed now by looking long and intently upon the problems of life. They were young then, and hope shone in their faces, and life lay before them with its possibilities, and their paths ran ever upward to the hill-crests of achievement. Now they are old, and the pathetic twilight of memory is on each countenance, and the fullness of life is behind them, and their paths lead downward through the loose sand of increasing decrepitude to the sunset valley of the grave. They are the last of the Old Guard—so few now, though once so many. As they, with a love that understands, place flowers on the green mounds that cover silently the forms of the comrades gone a day's march ahead, they wonder who will lay the garlands on their graves. They doubt not in their generous hearts that the coming generations will remember and that the air of Memorial Days in far-off years will still be redolent with the scent of the lilacs and that the beloved flag will wave afresh each May over the green mounds where rests their dust. But they know that, however much of reverence will guide the hands and hush the voices of those who will observe this day in the years to come, there will be lacking that blessed sense of

“SUNSET AND EVENING STAR”

fellowship interwoven in the same experiences. Reverence is very good, but, oh, it is not comradeship! So our hearts become tender, and in the midst of our tears we come into the knowledge that this faithful remembering of old comrades, this brave holding up to the eyes of the whole people the worth of a patriotism that counts not one's own life dear unto oneself, this cheerful carelessness concerning any memorial of themselves—so glad are they that they may still remember the others—is not the least heroic thing which they have done. Their simple, deep reverence for the flag and their faithful remembrance of those who cemented the Union in their blood makes us a little more eager to take off our hats to “Old Glory,” makes us a little more conscious of the debt we owe to the men who wrought mightily in the days that were, makes us desire to be ever loyal and courageous as soldiers of the common good in these days of ours. And so do these men serve us not a little.

But soldiers' graves are not the only ones garlanded to-day, and blue-clad men are not the only ones who move about the solemn place in the hush of tender memories and wistful regrets. Over there

FESTIVAL SHRINES

is a little group about a monument whose inscription tells that those whom it commemorates were gathered like ripe wheat into the Master's granary. The strong men and the fair women bending over the low green hills pull out a tiny weed here, dig a bit about a rosebush there, arrange the wreaths lovingly, speaking softly the while of "father" and "mother," and wondering if it had been possible to do something more for them. It comes into our hearts that those who lie there were soldiers, too, and heroic in their lives. We are also persuaded that one of the things very truly worth while is to do our work so simply and so bravely through the years that our sons and daughters will come some day, with mature understanding, bearing reverent laurels to our graves.

Yonder a little woman is weeping quietly over the place where one dark day they laid the still form of him on whose strength she had thought to lean till the shadows of sunset descended on their lives. The little one by her side weeps, too, but in sympathy and bewilderment rather than for any memory the child-mind can hold of the face beneath the sod. The woman is so alone in her woe. Her bewilderment, her loneliness, her blind misery

“SUNSET AND EVENING STAR”

grip our hearts like skeleton hands until they ache with a bitter helplessness. But a few feet of earth between the needle-pricked fingers, the tear-dimmed eyes, the pierced heart, and the hand that had held her own and the lips that had promised to comfort her in all life's sorrow; yet there come to her no word of cheer, no tender caress, no encircling arm of protection. Those lives that so few years ago ran together like the meeting of brooks are now separated by infinite distances or impassable barriers. The bitter mystery of it beats upon our hearts and our brains until we can only trust sadly and wait till the day comes in which we shall know as we are known. But hereafter, in the midst of the marriage merriment, when we hear the words, “until death do us part,” will come the fragrance of the lilacs and the memory of that still God's Acre with its green grave-billows and the black-clad woman broken underneath her woe.

Blind with our tears we wander away, and when we see once more we are near to where a man and a woman are beside a little grave—such a little grave. The woman, after the fashion of women the world over where children are concerned, is kneeling down trying to make the little, soft-grassed

FESTIVAL SHRINES

mound daintier, as though it were the empty crib at home. The father stands by with his heart in his face—as he used to stand watching the mother bathe the tiny form that for months now had not been kissed or fondled. Somehow both feel convicted of a strange, impossible neglect, as though they had willingly left their babe uncared for, or as though the child needed aught that they could do for him. The tears run silently down the cheeks of the mother, and the father's lips tremble as he lays a comforting hand on her sob-shaken shoulders. What a simple, world-old, infinite tragedy is here! The small grave, the little marble slab, the wreath of common flowers open the door through which we may see it all: the humble home, now strangely quiet, where so few months ago baby-feet pattered and baby-lips prattled; the broken and stained toys upstairs in the drawer, cheap at the beginning, marred much but unspeakably precious; the little empty bed all undisturbed that had pillowed the shining head and had been so often trampled by the dainty feet. There are little garments laid carefully away, to be taken out and wept over, and then put back again; a lock of golden-brown hair, a tiny ring, a silver cup, and a baby's spoon, and

“SUNSET AND EVENING STAR”

a thousand memories of broken baby-words and funny baby-gestures, and tender baby-caresses. They are all immeasurably precious, inexpressibly sad. Sometimes the father and the mother wish that they might forget it all; but the next instant they cry: “No! No! The babe is gone, but these memories are ours until we hold our child again.” “Till we hold our child again.” So do the hopes of Easter shine on the tears of Memorial Day and make a rainbow, at whose feet lies no pot of gold, but something more precious far; for there, at the very place where they come to the end of the arch that will make for their feet a glorious pathway beyond the stars, they will find baby-hands and baby-feet bathed in its mingled glories, and hear baby-laughter at its wondrous beauty, and feel baby-kisses of soft welcome for them. So they have their dear grave and their memories and their dreams. Still more they have, far more than that; for into their lives has come, because they had welcomed this babe, and again had said “Good-bye” to him, an exquisite fineness that nowhere has been revealed more eloquently or more tenderly than in the piteous words of the English divine, Dr. Parker:

“Baby was but two years old when, like a dew-

FESTIVAL SHRINES

drop, he went up to the warm sun, yet he left my heart as I have seen ground left out of which a storm has torn a great tree. We talk about the influence of great thinkers, great speakers, great writers; but what about the little infant's power? Oh, child of my heart, no poet has been so poetical, no soldier so victorious, no benefactor so kind, as thy tiny, unconscious self. I feel thy soft kiss on my withered lips just now, and would give all that I have for one look of thy dreamy eyes. But I can not have it.

"My God! Father of mine in the blue heaven, is not this the heaviest cross that can crush the weakness of man? Yet that green grave, not three feet long, is to me a great estate, making me rich with wealth untold. I can pray there. There I meet the infant angels; there I see all the mothers whose spirits are above; and there my heart says strange things in strange words—Baby, I am coming, coming soon! Do you know me? Do you see me? Do you look from sunny places down to this cold land of weariness? Oh, Baby; sweet, sweet Baby! I will try for your sake to be a better man; I will be kind to other little babies and tell them your name and sometimes let them play with

“SUNSET AND EVENING STAR”

your toys ; but, oh, Baby, Baby, my poor, old heart sobs and breaks.”

We wait till the rest are gone and sit long in that quiet place with the dead and our thoughts. Nor are we without certain unspeakable messages from God. Then we go home together in the cool hush of the spring sunset, silently. The solemnity of the day has discovered an unexpected profundity in our own souls. We did not know that they were so spacious as to give room for the little we said and for the great deal that we left unsaid because our speech became suddenly so crude and so insufficient. We have a larger respect for ourselves; being at the same time somewhat humbled for the notable disparity between the wealth of the revelation we were able to receive and the poverty of our power of expression. We are greater than we thought, and smaller, and know not whether to be glad or sorry. We are sure, only, that we can never be so superficial in thinking and in feeling and in living again.

Besides we have caught glimpses of unsuspected depths in the lives of others. We will see those old soldiers about their common work to-morrow, but

FESTIVAL SHRINES

we will remember the revelation of their hearts and the discovery of their souls that came to us to-day. Our hands will instinctively touch our hats in a reverent salute, not so much to them as to the exalted patriotism and the cheerful courage that placed them and keeps them ever in the Pantheon of heroes. Then, when we see those hard-headed business men through their office-windows, busy with their great affairs, or catch a glimpse of those stately social leaders moving from their big cars to some notable function, we will remember that, after all, they are just sons and daughters who love and who miss their father and their mother, and who do reverence to their memory. Perhaps we may meet the little seamstress hurrying home from her day's work to her little room and her child's greeting, and we will see not just a commonplace, busy woman concerned mainly over gusset and seam, tapeline and pattern, but a patient life into which has come a black tragedy, but in which still abides a pathetic joy. Then the tears will come again. And to-morrow evening we will see a man and a woman enter their gate slowly and go up the walk reluctantly and open their door with hesitation, and we will wonder why they do not hurry into the happy

“SUNSET AND EVENING STAR”

precincts of the home until we catch a glimpse of their faces and remember that the rooms are all quiet and in order, that the little crib is empty, and that no lullaby will be sung to-night for the babe that sleeps on in the little grave yonder at the foot of the hill. Because we have caught passing glimpses into these lives we are aware that beneath the ripples of every day, in the deeps of all men's hearts, move surging tides of sorrow and joy, of dream and reality, of despair and hope. Forever life will be to us more dignified, more significant, more wonderful.

We walk home in the sunset thinking silently that so will come the end of our lives and the dew of tears will fall for us awhile. Then the stars will shine through unnumbered years carelessly on our forgotten graves, and we wonder sadly if the end of life justifies its beginning. The sun has sunk behind the western hills, but the dust and the clouds have caught up its glory in a hundred mingled hues and shines and shades. Yellow and pink and orange and red and scarlet, great reaches of sky, huge piles of clouds, and the marvelous, shifting light and color over all. We stand and look, and

FESTIVAL SHRINES

the clouds are mountains now in a vast plain of glorious sky. Foothills and crags, cañons and ridges, high passes bathed in shadow and peaks crowned with snow—all splendid in the changing light and color. We find ourselves saying reverently, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem—I will look to the hills." Then there is a mystery of change, and we are looking on the walls of a city with tower and rampart and high gates, and, within, the massed roofs, and over all the wondrous glory. Now our lips are unconsciously whispering: "And I saw the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, arrayed as a bride for her husband—and her walls were precious stones—her gates were pearls—the glory of God shall lighten it—they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it." Then the towers fall and the walls crumble and the gates vanish. We look upon homes, palaces, and mansions, but still homes lighted in the deepening twilight with the warm, welcoming glow of hearth-fires. And those who walk the streets are all clad in rich robes, and the faces that look out of the windows are bright with happiness, and One resplendent in a kind of out-shining glory passes from house to house. Aged

“SUNSET AND EVENING STAR”

fathers and mothers bow their heads for His blessing; strong men and women talk eagerly with Him; children cling to His garments, and He carries a babe in His arms. Now we know that we are looking upon what David saw when he sang, “I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” We are seeing the vision of Jesus when He said: “In My Father’s city are many palaces. I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there ye may be also.”

We walk home in the gathering dark and part with a silent handgrip, knowing that deeper than the profound tragedies of life, deeper than our own souls are the ways and the love of our God. With the comforting pressure of the Everlasting Arms beneath us we fall asleep, breathing the heavy fragrance of the lilacs through our open windows.

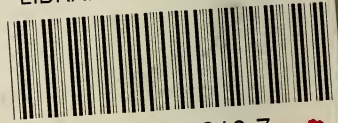
AUG 9 1913

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: August 2005

PreservationTechnologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 626 210 7

